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STATE FOR WHA/CAR (JOE TILGHMAN)  
INL/LP (NATALIA BOZZOLO)  
DEPT OF JUSTICE (ROBERT LIPPMAN)  
TREASURY FOR SARA GRAY

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [ELAB](#) [SOCI](#) [KCRM](#) [JM](#) [XL](#)

SUBJECT: JAMAICA: AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL RELEASES CONDEMNATORY REPORT  
ON PUBLIC SECURITY CRISIS, BUT SEES "NEW HOPE" WITH NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: A: KINGSTON 228  
B: 07 KINGSTON 1681  
C: 07 KINGSTON 1805  
D: 07 KINGSTON 1813

Summary  
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[¶1.](#) (U) "Let them kill each other: Public security in Jamaica's inner cities," is the title of a comprehensive report on public security released by Amnesty International during a press conference on April [¶2.](#) The 50 page report is the result of research and interviews conducted in Jamaica from December 2006 to October 2007. On April 3, representatives from Amnesty International met with the Pol/Econ Section of Embassy Kingston to discuss the report and the Government of Jamaica (GoJ)'s response. Amnesty perceives a "golden window of opportunity", of about 18 months, for the new government to make an impact on the public security in Jamaica before things once again begin to deteriorate. (Comment: Post shares this assessment. End Comment.)

Key Findings of the Report  
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[¶2.](#) (U) The report cites a "lack of political will" as being the primary obstacle in reforming the public security of the inner cities. A high murder rate for many years, an increase in police killings, corruption in law enforcement, and a broken judicial system are the areas of most concern. However, Amnesty mentions that over the last 20 years the GoJ has conducted several studies of crime and garrison violence, so the problems are well known; yet, there has never been a concerted effort to act and make the difficult decisions necessary to make improvements in the inner city environments, as well as meaningful reform of the JCF.

[¶3.](#) (U) According to the report, the principal victims of violent crime in Jamaica are living in extremely poor overcrowded ghettos or garrison communities. Between 30 and 45 percent of the population of the Kingston Metropolitan Area live in these communities. It is in these so-called garrison communities that political violence merges with harsh living conditions, thus creating the problems detailed in the report. When interviewed, residents of these communities complained about lack of jobs, lack of job training, lack of access to education, and substandard housing.

Political Roots of Violence  
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[¶4.](#) (U) Political violence always has been a feature of Jamaican party politics. Since independence in 1962, two political parties have dominated the scene: the current-ruling Jamaica Labour Party

(JLP) and the now-opposition People's National Party (PNP). Street violence and organized gangs have been regular features of the political process. The situation took a turn for the worse during the turbulent 70s, when sticks and stones were replaced with semi-automatic weapons.

15. (U) The report focuses on the garrison communities and their control by gangs and gang leaders. According to the report, "A garrison, as the name suggests, is a political stronghold, a veritable fortress completely controlled by a party. At one level a garrison community can be described as one in which anyone who seeks to oppose, raise opposition to or organize against the dominant party would definitely be in danger of suffering serious damage to their possessions or person thus making continued residence in the area extremely difficult if not impossible. Any significant social, political, economic or cultural development within the garrison can only take place with the tacit approval of the leadership (whether local or national) of the dominant party."

16. (U) This garrison phenomenon creates high levels of violence in the communities, and adjacent communities also suffer because of confrontations between rival gangs. The Amnesty report also notes that political violence in Jamaica reached its peak during the 1980 elections, when around 800 people were killed in clashes between rival groups. The report does note that the recent national election of 2007 did not see as much political violence as many had predicted. This was a relief given the violent history of Jamaican elections and the closeness of the race.

#### Poverty and the Links to Violence

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17. (SBU) Fernanda Daz Costa of Amnesty International summarized the report saying that their study shows a strong link between poverty in the inner cities and a propensity for crime. She said that many

years of neglect of the inner cities, and garrison communities, by the GoJ had created a crisis of public security and a power vacuum filled by gang leaders and drug dons. Many of these garrison residents feel trapped, too poor to move out, and threatened by both police and criminal elements in their communities.

18. (U) The report gives many first-hand accounts, the results of interviews conducted in the garrison communities by Amnesty. The report details many incidents of police violence and police killings, most of which have appeared in the local media as well (Ref A). The report also cites the high murder rates and recognizes the struggles and challenges faced by the Jamaica Constabulary Force (JCF) as they are confronted with violence and attempts on their lives on an almost daily basis.

#### Failures of the GoJ

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19. (U) Amnesty devotes an entire chapter to the failure to provide security. The introduction to the fourth chapter states, "The Jamaican state has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill the human rights to life, integrity and dignity of all people living under its jurisdiction. International human rights law requires that the authorities not abuse their powers and actively protect people's rights."

110. (U) The report also lists the failures of the government and how these lead to the poor people being denied security by the state. It also delineates the lack of public confidence in law enforcement; and the insufficient progress in reforming the JCF. Other highlights include the excessive force used by the police and the lack of accountability in cases of potential abuse by the police in carrying out their duties. Perhaps the biggest concern noted in this chapter is the lack of a comprehensive security policy.

#### Stories of Hope

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111. (U) Amnesty balances the negatives with a chapter dedicated to the new hope that has been created by the recently elected JLP-led government as they attempt to address security issues (Ref B, C, D). This section also lists many successful small initiatives and grass

roots organizations that are having a positive effect in some communities. One of these is the Peace Management Initiative (PMI) created in 2002, comprised of a group of 12 individuals from civil society and the two main political parties. Its mandate is "to head off or defuse explosions of violence in the Kingston Metropolitan Area and nearby parts of the adjoining parish of St Catherine." According to the report, PMI is completely independent from the government, but does receive some funding from the Ministry of National Security (MNS).

#### Conclusions from the Report

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¶12. (U) Amnesty calls on the Jamaican government to create a comprehensive public security plan for the protection of human rights to include the following priorities:

- The immediate implementation of a program to reduce and prevent homicides and police killings in inner-cities;
- The immediate reduction of excessive force by the JCF;
- Reforms to the JCF to create a police force that is representative, responsive and accountable to all the community and respectful of human rights;
- Combating corruption;
- Effective retraining of the police in the legitimate use of force and alternatives to the use of firearms according to international and national standards;
- A plan to combat root causes of violence, in particular disparities and discrimination in the access to economic, social and cultural rights;
- Strategies to combat stigmatization and discrimination against inner-city communities;
- Reinforcing initiatives such as the Peace Management Initiative;
- Reporting publicly on a yearly basis on progress in implementation.

#### Response from GoJ

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¶13. (SBU) Whereas most past government officials in Jamaica have taken a very defensive posture in response to similar reports, Prime Minister Bruce Golding (PM Golding) spoke freely in the media about Amnesty's most recent report. He admitted that many of its conclusions and statements were true. Golding also agreed that corruption and unprofessional behavior by the JCF are a recognized problem. However, he was quick to point out some of the current proposals his new government has announced in response to issues of law and order and corruption; among these are a special prosecutor to deal with corruption and a new independent body for police accountability (Ref C, D).

¶14. (U) The representatives from Amnesty International were encouraged by the initial response from the GoJ, and said they believed PM Golding is trying to engage on the key issues. Amnesty perceives a "golden window of opportunity", of about 18 months, for the new government to make an impact on the public security in Jamaica before things once again begin to deteriorate. (Comment: Post shares this assessment. End Comment.) While the GoJ is sending the right signals initially, the initiatives need to be pursued vigorously over the long haul.

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